

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARIZONA ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TASK FORCE

**November 20, 2006
1:30 p.m., MST**

The Arizona English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force met in Hearing Room 1 of the Arizona Senate Building, 1700 W. Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona. Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m., MST.

1. Call to Order

Present:

Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman
Mr. Jim DiCello
Dr. Eugene Garcia
Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan
Ms. Johanna Haver
Ms. Eileen Klein
Ms. Karen Merritt
Ms. Anna Rosas
Dr. John Baracy

Absent:

A quorum was present for the purpose of conducting business.

2. Approval of September 28, 2006 minutes of Task Force Meetings

Mr. Alan Maguire stated that the minutes were still under review and would be presented at the next Task Force meeting.

3. Presentations and discussion of components, definitions, and terms of SEI

Ms. Leann Gilbreath, Director of Monitoring from the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), Office of English Acquisition Services (EAS), described the selection process that ADE uses to monitor ELL student performance and ELL program success in Local Education Agencies (LEAs). See Attachment A. Based on requirements in the law, districts and charter schools are divided into three categories: Category 1, Category 2, and Category 3. Category 1 contains the 50 LEAs with the highest population of ELL students. The ELL counts are taken from SAIS (Student Accountability Information System). Using a four year cycle, the ADE/EAS staff

monitor 12 Category 1 LEAs each year. Category 2 includes districts and charter schools that are not included in Category 1 and have more than 25 ELL students. Category 3 consists of LEAs with 25 or fewer ELL students. Ten LEAs from Category 2 and Category 3 are monitored annually.

Ms. Gilbreath stated that, once districts are identified, schools are chosen and placed in a four-year monitoring cycle. ADE monitoring staff looks at: schools with the highest and lowest number of ELLs; the school label under AZ LEARNS (Arizona Leading Education in Arizona through the Reporting and Notification System), such as Underperforming or Excelling; the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status; AMAO (Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives) determination; the school improvement status; dual language and bi-lingual programs; exemplary ELL programs; high number of emergency teaching certificates; Structured English Immersion (SEI) and bi-lingual endorsements; any written complaints sent to ADE and, difficulties with Title III portions of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) plans or Title III fiscal applications. ADE monitoring staff schedule follow-up visits for schools with corrective action plans. They also look for Highly Qualified teachers in the SEI, mainstream and bi-lingual classrooms; teacher endorsements in each area that they are teaching; Highly Qualified paraprofessionals and how they actually instruct and assist teachers; teacher and paraprofessional English fluency; District activities and opportunities that involve parents such as adult ELL classes, homework help lines and literacy nights etc.

A new provision added in HB 2064, requires that each month EAS staff will assess a random sample of 300 ELL students to determine how many of the sample can read the randomly ordered alphabet in thirty seconds or less and how many of the sample can read a randomly sorted list of thirty single-syllable words in one minute or less. Another new requirement from HB 2064 requires that monitoring include an analysis of programmatic effectiveness. ADE staff is in the process of updating the monitoring guide and will include the SEI models adopted by the Task Force. The guide cites the sources of monitoring requirements - NCLB, state law and State Board rule.

Dr. Eugene Garcia requested clarification on the process of selection of schools to be scheduled for monitoring. Ms. Gilbreath stated that schools are selected for monitoring based on state and federal laws and State Board of Education requirements. LEAs are monitored to see if they are identifying the students correctly, using the proper forms, placing students in programs and determining if the programs are successful. The monitoring reports are sent to the Districts and kept on file at ADE.

Dr. John Baracy asked how the 12 LEAs were selected from Category A. In the discussion that followed Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan asked if there was state law that delineated the required number of ELL students for each of the three monitoring categories. Ms. Gilbreath said that the number requirement for each of the monitoring categories is from the Flores consent decree and Arizona Revised Statutes. It was established that the laws determine the monitoring categories, but individual school selection is based on ADE guidelines.

Ms. Garcia Dugan stated that NCLB and the Flores Consent Decree require excelling schools to be identified. Ms. Gilbreath responded that excelling schools with exceptional ELL models share information on their programs with schools that are struggling and need improvement. She stated that information on effective Structured English Immersion practices is shared at the monthly Practitioners of English Language Learners (PELL) meetings and at conferences for ELL practitioners. There is information on the PELL website. Ms. Johanna Haver asked how many ELL practitioners attend PELL meetings. Ms. Gilbreath stated that since the meetings were established, the numbers have been rising steadily and currently there are approximately 150 attendees. Meeting dates are posted on the ADE website. Attendees get a great deal of information at the meetings and meeting notes are posted on the ADE website. Sometimes ADE is asked by a district, for an exemplary program to look at. Based on the results of monitoring, a recommendation for an exemplary program can be made based on similarities of the district characteristics.

Dr. Garcia asked if ADE will have responsibility for monitoring once the Task Force has deliberated and the models are adopted. Ms. Gilbreath stated that it will be ADE's responsibility to monitor the programs as established by the Task Force.

Ms. Gerry Haskins, also from the Office of English Acquisition Services, provided a PowerPoint® overview of the ELL Monitory Notebook used during on-site monitoring visits. See Attachment B. EAS stipulates the contents of the notebook, and each LEA assembles its own notebook following the content outline. The LEA/school that has been identified for monitoring must have its ELL Monitoring Notebook available at the time of the site visit. Ms. Haskins stated that within the notebook are several forms e.g., Home Language Survey, Parental Notification and Consent, Parental Request for Student Withdrawal from an ELL program, Waivers, Reclassified Letter for Parents or Guardians. The notebook also has the policies and procedures for ELL assessment, placement, and reclassification, and a place where the LEA must include its ELL program model. In addition, the notebook has an attestation statement affirming that the person administering the ELL assessment is a proficient English speaker, a list of teacher qualifications, and lists of students who are PHLOTES, reclassified, and monitored, and ELL students receiving compensatory instruction.

In response to a question by Dr. Garcia, Ms. Haskins stated that monitoring is conducted by EAS staff members, who must be certified teachers because classroom monitoring is a component. Dr. Garcia asked if there was a standard rubric used for monitoring. Ms. Irene Moreno, Deputy Associate Superintendent from EAS, replied that monitors use a standard rubric to assess compliance. Dr. Baracy asked how the information from site visits was summarized and/or published. Ms. Haskins stated that information collected at the on-site monitoring visit is sent in a letter to the school and kept on file. Dr. Baracy asked if the Task Force could obtain a list and executive summaries of compliant LEAs. Ms. Haskins replied that she could provide the Task Force with the information requested.

4. Presentations and discussions of English Language Learners program models

Mr. Alan Maguire briefly introduced the presenters from ASU, U of A, and NAU. The presenters were asked to present current research on Structured English Immersion (SEI) and to share their expertise concerning the essential elements of successful ELL programs. Each presenter had been provided a list of questions to consider within his presentation. See Attachment C.

Dr. Richard Ruiz, Professor of Language, Reading, and Culture, and Head of the Department of Teaching and Teacher Education, University of Arizona, was the first presenter.

Dr. Ruiz began his PowerPoint® presentation with his concluding statement. See Attachment D. His conclusion was that ELL programs should facilitate opportunities to use the language being learned in different contexts and functions, so that one is not merely learning a language for the sake of learning a language. Dr. Ruiz stated, “Speaking is learned by speaking, writing through writing, and reading through reading. One wants to create conditions for a language’s use and create perceptions of its usefulness.” Dr. Ruiz also said that one problem that inhibits acquisition is that some communities don’t see the usefulness of learning English. Therefore, learning English should be promoted in family, community, and other areas. He stated that the role of the teacher is important, but not expansive.

Dr. Ruiz stated that teacher preparation programs should prepare teachers to take into context the knowledge that a child brings, and to recognize the value of the child’s primary language and culture. Assessments should not just be one or two standardized tests, but varied, since not all children do well at the same kinds of tests. He stated that language is best learned when it is not the focus of the study, but a medium for learning a variety of subjects. Also, development of a student’s primary language is important in the development of a second language, as it involves cognitive development. Therefore, teachers should strive to activate a student’s prior knowledge and build on background knowledge. Language comes in four stages from cognitively undeveloped to developed, from casually conversing with friends to taking an oral exam. Dr. Ruiz said that the best SEI strategy is to group ELL students of similar proficiency together for part of the day, and group them heterogeneously with mainstream English speakers for other parts of the day.

Dr. Christian Faltis, Professor of Education, Division of Curriculum and Instruction, Mary Lou Fulton College of Education, Arizona State University, was the second presenter. Dr. Faltis stated that research has identified some common elements of successful SEI programs. These common elements include: personnel who have a common vision about the needs of ELL students and are dedicated to achievement; a high ELL population; and, and a school/district philosophy that doesn’t allow failure. Dr. Faltis said that counselors are the first contact an ELL student has with the school and are vitally important to an SEI program, as are ELL coordinators who are involved in professional development and teacher coaching.

Dr. Faltis stated that there are three different types of ELL students: students who have prior schooling in their primary language; students with limited schooling who may be two or more

years behind academically; and ELL students who are “long term” who are not receiving the help that they need. He stated that there is a research-based recommendation that some students do benefit from having primary language support, which can help literacy in their second language. Dr. Faltis said that the length of time to become English proficient varies. Typically to become proficient in conversational English takes three to four years of study. The level of English proficiency needed to succeed on standardized tests such as AIMS, may take four to seven years to acquire. Dr. Faltis stated the importance of teaching the whole child, taking into account family and community. He is concerned that most districts don’t conduct native language assessments.

The third presentation was by Dr. Norbert Francis, Associate Professor of Bilingual/Multicultural Education College of Education, Northern Arizona University. Dr. Francis thanked the Task Force for their questions and for listening to the presentations. He stated that research has shown there are no definitive answers yet. Therefore, the best approach is to keep options open.

Dr. Francis shared cursory findings from the Carnegie Corporation research summary titled “*Double the Work.*” ELL students face “double the work” in learning both a new language and academically achieving in that second language. All ELL programs can be effective. The summary agreed that immersion overall is the most effective way to learn a second language, especially teaching through content.

Dr. Francis reiterated Dr. Ruiz’s idea of taking into account what an ELL student already knows. However, he stated that literacy in the first language may not be necessary to gain literacy in the second language. Dr. Francis said that a high level of proficiency is needed in English for a high level of literacy. He recommended pairing English language development classes with content-based learning.

Dr. Ruiz asked Dr. Francis about his interpretation of the law that some teachers believe that no first language should be allowed in the classroom. Dr. Francis replied that some use should be allowed. Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan stated that the law states that materials may not be presented in a language other than English, but a minimal amount of native language may be used for clarification or quick translation. But the native language should be kept to a minimum per Proposition 203.

Mr. Maguire asked about the homogeneous and heterogeneous groups and when it was appropriate to mix students with different proficiencies. Dr. Ruiz replied that language arts classes should be composed of students with homogenous levels of language development. For other classes it would be better to have heterogeneous groups of students. An elementary classroom could be reorganized into a kind of homeroom structure where the homeroom could be a heterogeneous grouping. Then students would be homogeneously grouped in classes for English language development. Dr. Faltis said that various grouping strategies are beneficial, such as using small groups and pairing a more proficient English speaker with a less proficient speaker. Dr. Francis stressed that a flexible approach to grouping is necessary. He stated that

ELL students should not be “submerged” when grouped with native or proficient English speakers. Dr. Francis stated that if there is adequate context support and ELL students understand the instruction, then heterogeneous grouping is the best rule. High contextual classes such as physical education and art are best for a more heterogeneous grouping. Some content classes are best grouped homogeneously by ability.

Ms. Eileen Klein asked how mobility mitigates the effectiveness of an ELL program and how to handle the impact of mobility. Dr. Faltis said that the key to mobility issues is assessment. Dr. Ruiz mentioned research on middle grades from the Helios Foundation which he can share with the Task Force. The research discusses a mobility system or regional “mobile assessment system” that identifies methods for assessment data to follow the child. Dr. Francis said that it was the correct decision that the state now has a standardized assessment. One of the benefits of the single assessment is that it provides an even, standardized scale regardless of where the student moves in the state.

Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan gave further clarification about the use of languages other than English as stated in Arizona Revised Statutes. She stated that minimal instruction can be given in the child’s native language if the teacher knows the language, and that all subject matter must be taught in English.

Ms. Garcia Dugan stated that it was her understanding that the Diane August study (“Developing Literacy in Second-Language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth” edited by Diane August and Timothy Shanahan) was not going to be published by the USDOE (because there were some problems with it.) Dr. Francis answered that the USDOE, which funded the study, chose not to publish the study but did not block the publishing of the findings. Ms. Garcia Dugan stated that she read that the number one finding in the executive summary of “Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners:...” was that developing strong oral language development in the target language is a key factor in English acquisition.

Dr. Garcia asked three questions of the guest speakers. The first question was in reference to the Carnegie Corporation research summary titled “*Double the Work.*” Question One: “Does double the work mean double the time?” Question Two: “What kind of special resources are needed?” Question Three: “How does one assess when a student should enter and exit the program? What kind of assessment?”

In response to Question One, Dr. Ruiz stated that, “double the work” does not equal double the time, but considers the question of time as more a question of quality. Quality of instruction and teacher experience are factors. “It is a moving target. All are progressing. Assessment is the key.” He stated that the student is trying to hit a moving target, trying both to learn a second language and to catch-up to mainstream students who are continuing to learn academically. Dr. Faltis said more time may be required for students to achieve proficiency in schools where there is a higher ELL population. He stated that the process for achieving literacy should not be limited. Proficiency should not be within a specific timeframe. Dr. Faltis stated that the time

limit for proficiency, which he estimated to be between three and five years, ignores how a child learns and the level of language needed to be successful. Dr. Francis stated that there is a lot of variation in the time needed to achieve proficiency because there are lots of variations in each child's learning of a second language. For some students, a year is sufficient. Dr. Francis said that resources should be provided as long as they are necessary.

In response to Question Two, Dr. Ruiz said that many resources are non-school resources. He stated that parent and community involvement are important in supporting and promoting language acquisition, as well as the normal physical resources, such as books. Dr. Faltis said that teacher education is critical, and that ideally teachers should have instruction in a second language to help them learn strategies on how to teach language acquisition. Dr. Faltis said that special education teachers need to know about ELL practices. He also stated that after school programs and a connection to the community are important resources.

In response to Question Three, Dr. Faltis stated that in addition to the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA), others assessments should be used. Dr. Francis thought there should be two assessments, one for placement, where he thought AZELLA did a good job, and another assessment for reclassification. Dr. Francis recommended AIMS for the reclassification assessment.

Dr. John Baracy asked the guest presenters to elaborate on what they recommend as best practices for teaching English language acquisition and to provide any additional advice they have for the Task Force in addressing the needs of ELL students, "as we go down this journey." Dr. Ruiz stressed flexibility. He recommended using a child's first language in instruction "to promote language development" and finding room within the law for this approach. Dr. Ruiz stated that he saw a problem when all primary language use is discouraged. He recommended that the Task Force make recommendations to the State Legislature stating that the law is too restrictive.

Ms. Karen Merritt asked the presenters to share their insights on how the four hours of ELD instruction might look in elementary classes, such as kindergarten, or in third grade. Dr. Francis shared his concern that there is a danger in keeping all ELL students in mainstream classrooms with native/proficient English speakers. Ms. Merritt asked if four hours of ELD are required for elementary aged students. Dr. Francis said that the short answer is yes. Dr. Ruiz stated that there needs to be a mixture, with some subjects taught in a SEI classroom and other subjects taught in a class that is heterogeneously grouped. He said that language development needs to be within some kind of context such as children learning songs or stories. The four hours of ELD instruction may require elementary schools to reorganize their time allocations during a typical school day. He stated that different groupings that provide lots of opportunities for language development are important and that, for young students, ELD instruction should be integrated with content, not isolated, such as simply learning verbs. Dr. Faltis stated that in early education, there is a lot of contextual support such as physical motion and patterns such as music or art. There are also social situations such as how to ask for things or interact, and children can learn to listen, distinguishing between words like "bunny" and "funny". Math and science could also be

considered as part of the four hour instruction with a language development emphasis. He also stated that the universities need more classes in teaching content through language development methodologies.

Ms. Johanna Haver asked members of the guest panel if there is evidence that the earlier a child begins instruction in a second language the faster he or she becomes proficient. Dr. Francis said that the research is mixed, and that each child is an individual who may have his or her own timescale. Ms. Haver expressed a concern that sheltered content may be watered down. Dr. Francis said that the greater danger is that in a heterogeneous group, the ELL student may not be learning anything.

5. Call to the Public

Mr. Alan Maguire made the call to the public. Mr. Mike Smith, representing Arizona School Administrators (ASA) spoke to the Task Force. He stated that this law creates a major policy change and public educators need to figure out how to deal with it very quickly. There are two major elements missing from the law – resources and implementation guidelines.

The law requires the school districts to provide a great deal of data for monitoring purposes. He asked how districts are to comply with the law in the period before the models are adopted. He requested that an understandable timeline be adopted on how implementation will rollout. The law states that a district can appeal to the Task Force for approval of an alternative model. Mr. Smith asked under what criteria these models will be evaluated. He then asked when monitoring for compliance with the new law will begin. He asked if compliance might begin one year after districts adopt models, or possibly immediate compliance. Mr. Smith said that the districts need to know when they are going to be directly liable for full implementation because loss of funding to districts could occur.

6. Adjournment

Mr. Alan Maguire adjourned the meeting at 4:25 p.m.

Arizona ELL Task Force

Alan Maguire, Chairman
January 18, 2007